DEMOCRATIC
GERMAN REPORT

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Yanks Tap East German Telephones

WHO IS LISTENING ON YOUR PHONE?

On another page of this issue you can read full details about the extraordinary exploits of United States intelligence agents who recently burrowed 300 yards into the territory of the German Democratic Republic to tap important international trunk telephone lines.

The Government of the German Democratic Republic has often pointed out in the past that there can be little hope of normalising the situation in Berlin, and lessening tension here, until the activities of the dozens of espionage and sabotage organisations maintained in West Berlin are ended.

The discovery of the multi-million-dollar wire-tap operation only brings out into the open how vast, and how dangerous to peace, these operations are.

But the uncovering of these American "underground" operations must be of interest to people in many countries outside Germany too. The spy tunnel started in the American-occupied sector of West Berlin from a building officially described as a radar station. How many other tunnels run out from United States "radar stations", or airfields or other installations in Britain or other countries?

Who is tapping your phone?

British material used for building the American spy tunnel in Berlin: full story and pictures inside

Socialist Unity offer to Social Democrats:

"LET'S TALK IT OVER"

Leaders of the Socialist Unity Party in the German Democratic want to talk over mutual problems with Social Democratic leaders in West Germany, and to bring about an understanding between the workers' parties.

This was the theme of an important letter addressed on April 26th to Erich Ollenhauer, Chairman of the West German Social Democratic Party, by Walter Ulbricht and Otto Grotewohl, leading members of the Socialist Unity Party in the German Democratik Republic. Here is the text of the letter:

"Dear Comrades,

"The creation of an atmosphere which will guarantee international peace is a vital question for the German people. Such an atmosphere can only be created and peace ensured if the forces pressing towards war are pushed back and rendered powerless.

"The frozen and unintelligent policy pursued by Chancellor Adenauer in Bonn is a very real threat to peace. The arming of the Federal Republic and its inclusion in the NATO war pact creates new tensions in Europe and represents a danger for the German people and for every sort of social progress.

"This demonstrates the great responsibility borne by the working class of the whole of Germany at the present time.

"A lessening of tension by mutual agreement must be in the interests of all Germans, particularly the German working class. There can be no doubt that the working class of Germany has common interests and aims, although there are various differences of opinion between the workers' parties. These common interests present the basis for an understanding. In order to make this understanding easier, we believe that the time has come for both sides to do all they can to clear away all obstacles and all things which divide us.

(cont. on next page)

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"LET'S TALK IT OVER"

"Following a proposal made by the Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party, the Cabinet of the German Democratic Republic has decided to recommend to the President the pardoning of those persons who have broken the law and acted for various spy centres, and who claim to be members of the Social Democratic Party.

"The persons, who were sentened by the courts, have caused damage to the German Democratic Republic. They were not punished because of their party membership or their political convictions. We believe that their release will play a considerable role in overcoming unjustified preconceptions and other obstacles to an understanding between the workers' parties in the whole of Germany.

"There should be no doubt, however, that illegal acts will be punished in future in the German Democratic Republic, just as in all other countries.

"We believe that we can await from the Central Board of the Social Democratic Party that it, for its part, does everything possible to overcome the obstacles to an understanding between the workers' parties. A step in this direction would undoubtedly be the immediate cessation of the espionage activity of the 'East Bureau' of the Social Democratic Party, which has the character of a centre for spies and agents directed against the German Democratic Republic. There can be no necessity for the existence of such an installation as the East Bureau of the Social Democratic Party.

"We are ready at any time to discuss the mutual exchange of information on all problems of interest; we are ready at any time to receive delegations of Social Democratic comrades from the Federal Republic so that they can see for themselves on the spot what has been created here. We believe that this is the right path and that it will bring nearer the understanding between the workers' parties.

"In the expectation that you are also convinced of the need for such an understanding we remain, with socialist greetings,

W. Ulbricht, O. Grotewohl."

SOCIAL DEMOCRATS IN "TREASON" TRIAL

High treason charges were brought against Social Democrats Robert Steigerwald, Karl Woelz, Horst Boje, Fred Loewenberg, Herbert Levenhagen and Georg Beckmann of the Socialist Action Association, in the trial which began on April 9th in Karlsruhe.

Progress of the trial shows that the main object is to extend present suppression of all sorts of left-wing organisations and democratic bodies to Social Democratic organisations.

Charges included "influencing through the Communist Party" and "secret association". Witnesses for the defence brought proofs that the Socialist Action Association had never been influenced by the Communist Party and that there was no possible ground for the "secret association" charge, since both offices and workers employed in the Socialist Action Association have been duly registered with the police and have carried on open political work for a number of years.

Win a New Reader

Fill in the name and address of a friend, work-mate or acquaintance on the form below, and send it to

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Berlin W 8, Germany

We shall be pleased to mail sample copies of the paper to him or her.

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Address .....

W. Germans are Uncivilised, says "Times"

The "Times" of London described the West German authorities as uncivilised on May 4th. The comment came in a report of the International Film Festival at Cannes, at which the French film "Nuit et Brouillard", dealing with nazi concentration camps, could not be shown owing to official West German protests. Commenting on this action the "Times" stated: "It is difficult to feel anything but scorn for those who demanded the withdrawal of this solemn and terrible elegy — as well as for those who acceded to their demand. 'Nuit et Brouillard' is a film which cries out to be seen; and which no people who call themselves civilised can refuse to see."

Graves Desecrated

The West Berlin "Tagesspiegel" of April 21st reported that the Jewish cemetery of Preussisch-Oldendorf, Westphalia, had been damaged by hooligans. Gravestones, some of them under protection as ancient monuments, had been torn up and smashed.

Thirty-eight gravestones in the Jewish cemetery in Hamburg were torn down during the night of April 25th. This is the 306th case of vandalism in Jewish graveyards in West Germany since the end of the war.

Complete Fishing Fleet for Albania

The Fuerstenberg docks in East Germany will build a complete fishing fleet for Albania this year. Nine ocean-going cutters and a fishing ship with echo equipment and laboratory will be supplied by the end of May. The first two vessels have already been launched.

East German Workers in Hungary

About 120 East German experts are helping to build the Borsod Kazincbarcika power station, which will be the largest of its kind in Hungary, and one of the most modern plants in Europe. Seventeen German factories supplied more than half the equipment, including ten boilers, each with a capacity of 100 tons steam per hour, steel constructions for the kilometre long conveying plant, rope-ways and water dressing plant.

East German Machines for Chinese Glass Factory

Draft plans for a new glass factory in Peking, which will be finished in 1957, were drawn up in East German, and East German machines are to be used in building it.

OPERATION "WIRE – TAP"

American Spies Cut International Phone-Lines

American spies have driven an underground tunnel 300 yards into the territory of the German Democratic Republic to intercept and tap international trunk telephone lines, it was revealed in East Berlin on April 21st.

The spy tunnel, which had been constructed in defiance of all normal standards of international behaviour, ran from an American building, allegedly a radar station, in the American-occupied sector of Berlin, to a main telephone cable in Alt Glienicke, 300 yards inside East Berlin.

Here 160 telephone lines, including important international lines, had been tapped, and connected to American and British recording and amplifying equipment, valued at several million dollars. The tunnel, which was about 15 feet below ground level, was reinforced with steel girders, and was air-conditioned and electrically lit from the American sector.

The tunnel was discovered by telephone linesmen checking the lines, and was thrown open to inspection by the international press soon after discovery.

Immediately after the discovery of the spy tunnel the Soviet military authorities in East Germany filed a protest with the American military authorities, but received only the reply that this matter was outside their competence. The Government of the German Democratic Republic also addressed a sharp protest to the U. S. military authorities against this violation of the territory of the Republic and illegal interference with telephone communications.

"Even the Russians got some fun out of it", wrote the Hamburg "Welt", on April 26th, "when they discovered a perfectly equipped telephone tapping centre in the tunnel last Sunday . . . with amplifiers, measuring instruments and telephone lines in a room with cement floor and whitewashed reinforced concrete walls, which gave it the appearance of a laboratory.

"It was something like a laboratory too. Here in this room, mysterious operators had been tapping about 300 telephone lines for over a year, according to Soviet estimates. The receiving room, whose temporary inhabitants must have had pretty good nerves, is almost exactly under the main road to Schoenefeld airfield, along which run the telephone lines to Soviet headquarters in Karlshorst and Zossen and the relay lines via Frankfurt on the Oder to Moscow . . .

"All equipment discovered has markings in English. The tunnel leading from the receiving centre itself is about 2 metres high, the roof supported by steel girders, and stretches about 600 metres to the American radar station. The whole thing is expertly built, with an air-conditioning plant which was still functioning on Tuesday, and neon lighting."

(Photos by Zentralbild, Berlin)

Two views of the American spy tunnel in Berlin. On the left the complicated tapping equipment: on the right the tunnel itself.

SOCIAL INSURANCE

East and West Germany Compared

The table given on these pages makes a comparison between the sickness benefits and pensions paid by the social insurance fund in East Germany and the average payments made by private, municipal and provincial insurance schemes in West Germany.

Every employed person is compulsorily insured in East Germany; his premium, 10 percent of his gross earnings, is deducted from his wages. The employer also pays a sum amounting to 10 per cent of gross earnings, and the state pays a subsidy amounting to several thousand million marks. Peasants, craftsmen and other persons working on a free-lance basis make up annual statements of their earnings on the basis of which they pay about the same percentage in premiums, up to a maximum of 60 marks per month. Basic premiums are about the same in West Germany, but as these tables show, benefits are more limited, administration costs much higher and there are various other insurance payments to be made if a worker wants to insure himself against all eventualities.

If the contributions appear to readers to be high, they must remember that the Hitlerite war had a very great influence on the normal composition of the population. Losses were highest amongst the younger generation, so that the proportion of disabled persons, old-age pensioners and widows and orphans is unusually high.

In 1952 there was one pensioner to be supported for every 2.15 persons in work, compared to a proportion of one to six in 1910, and one to five in 1921. This figure has not altered very much since 1952, so that about half of the social insurance fund must still be devoted to paying out pensions.

A very important difference between the present social insurance system in East Germany and the old-fashioned system still prevailing in West Germany is that the East German social security authorities play an active part in the popularisation and use of preventive medicine.

As early as 1947 an order issued by the Soviet Military Administration laid down that the social insurance fund should help to establish a proper network of factory clinics and first aid stations. Since then the tasks of social insurance in the field of preventive medicine have grown enormously, and convalescent homes and sanatoria run by the social insurance fund under the supervision of the trade unions are to be found in all parts of East Germany. In West Germany convalescent and sanatorium treatments are so-called "possible" services to which insured persons have no legal claim.

All bigger factories in East Germany now have their own polyclinics for their workers. Smaller factories must have first-aid stations, and there is already a broad network of country clinics and cottage hospitals throughout the country districts.

East Germany

Soviet Military Administration Order No. 28. 1946, established central social insurance organisation, with one standard of benefits and premiums. Control was transferred to the trade unions in April 1951, so that insured persons are now in control of their own insurance system.

For purposes of more direct administration, peasants (other than those employed on nationally owned estates), craftsmen and other persons working on a free-lance basis, will under a new law of 1956 pay into their own social insurance service, whose administration is under direct control of representatives of peasants', craftsmen's and freelance workers' organisations. Contributions and benefits will be about the same as before.

West Germany

On June 1st 1954 there were over 2,000 separate sickness benefit, 94 accident insurance and 29 pensions schemes. The first post-war law on self-government of social insurance schemes, passed in August 1952, provided for administrative committees with 50 % workers' and 50 % employers' representation. (Under the Weimar Republic the proportion was $^2/_3$ workers' and $^1/_3$ employers' representation.) Legal basis of payments is still the 1911 Reich Insurance Order, with supplementary laws totalling over 4,000 paragraphs.

COSTS OF ADMINISTRATION

1946: 4.6 % of total expenditure.
1954: less than 1 %.

1953: (according to official figures) between 7 % and 13 % of total expenditure in the various insurance schemes.

MEDICAL AND DENTAL TREATMENT

Free for an unlimited period of time for insured persons and their families. Patients can choose their doctors. Travelling expenses to nearest government clinic and transfer to specialists reimbursed.

Treatment fee of 25 pfennigs (except in British Zone and Bavaria), remitted for those in receipt of unemployment or welfare benefit, or with TB or venereal diseases. Travelling expenses to specialist reimbursed only on doctor's recommendation.

East Germany	West Germany

MEDICINES AND APPLIANCES

All medicines and small appliances (spectacles, trusses, baths and massage etc.) and major appliances (artificial limbs, wheel chairs or hearing aids, free to insured persons and their families. Small charge for orthopaedic footwear (12 marks per pair for adults, 6 marks for children and pensioners.) All repairs free. Dentures free, except for additional costs (for use of precious metals etc.)

Doctors may only prescribe up to 6 marks' worth of medicines per patient per month. Prescription fee of 25 pfennigs in American and French zones, 50 pfennigs in British zone. Only 50 % paid for family members (except in British zone). Full costs in cases of certifiable and venereal diseases only. Limited payments for smaller and major appliances. Payments for dentures vary between 2/3 and 3/4 of costs.

HOSPITAL TREATMENT

Free up to 26 weeks for insured persons and families, up to 52 weeks where the patient will then be fit for work, longer for TB cases. Home treatment also free and sickness benefits paid in full.

Free up to 26 weeks or longer if the patient will then be fit for work, for insured persons; for their families, from four to 13 weeks. Home treatment free, but with 25 % reduction of sick benefit. Payments seldom made for family members.

SICK PAY

Up to 10 marks per day, according to wages, for 26 weeks or if necessary 39 weeks, plus the difference between sick pay and 90 % of wages for six weeks; from 7th to 15th week (according to length of time insured) a daily allowance equal to patient's weekly trade union contribution paid from trade union funds. 80 % of sick pay paid during hospitalisation. Those not entitled to sick pay get pocket money equal to 50 % of sick benefit and wage allowance.

Up to 8.33 marks per day for 26 weeks; may be increased after 7th week of illness and some allowance made for wife and children. Some schemes pay more after ten years' insurance.

CONVALESCENT HOLIDAYS AND CURES

1955: social insurance paid for nearly half a million cures for insured persons or family members (TB cures not included).

Over a million children were sent to social insurance homes in 1954.

Payments made only after six months' insurance. Partial payments for 4 to 6 weeks for family members. Nothing or part payment for children. Employees' and invalid schemes undertake curative holidays where an invalid may be restored to working health.

MATERNITY BENEFITS

Leave on full pay for 11 weeks (5 before and 6 after confinement; 12 weeks for mining workers). Two weeks' extension after difficult birth. Special grant of 50 marks. Confinement in hospital or maternity clinic free. Free convalescent holidays for expectant mothers in poor health. Working women cannot be dismissed or put on lower-paid jobs after 3rd month of pregnancy or until 6 weeks after confinement.

Leave on full pay for 12 weeks (10 weeks for house servants and daily maids). 75 pfennigs daily allowance for 26 weeks for nursing mothers. Special grant of 10 marks.

Free hospitalisation only in case of difficult birth. Cash payments halved during hospitalisation.

No payments for convalescent holidays for expectant mothers.

ACCIDENTS AT WORK AND OCCUPATIONAL DISEASES

50 % of basic wages, whether hospitalised or not, from first day up to payment of disablement pension, and the difference between sick pay and 90 % of net wages.

Payments begin on 4th day of incapacitation, 50 % of basic wages, for at most 26 weeks.

DISABLEMENT PENSIONS

Pension based on previous wages, e. g. 60 % incapacitated gets pension equal to 60 % of wages plus 10 % allowance for each child.

Standard pensions, not based on wages. No family allowances.

OTHER AVERAGE MONTHLY PENSIONS

Old Age:	92.20 marks
Invalid:	90.86 marks
Widows:	68.77 marks
Orphans:	35.81 marks
Full orphans:	55.81 marks

Old age pensioners still working receive full pension. Trade union members of 40 years' standing get 10 marks a month extra from trade union funds if pension does not exceed 200 marks a month. Those in need of special care get 20 to 60 marks a month extra. All social insurance services free to pensioners and their families.

Invalid and Old Age:	78.80 marks
Widows:	49.20 marks
Full and half orphans:	31.80 marks

In the former British Zone pensioners who continue working receive no cash payments.

Additional payments only paid in accident cases. Other assistance only paid to pensioners who have paid into separate insurance schemes for such purposes.

HEINRICH HEINE (1797–1856)

Samples of his Poetry

Several readers have asked for samples of the work of Heinrich Heine, great German poet and rebel, who died just one hundred years ago. On this page we reproduce some verses from Heine's "Germany — A Winter Tale", and the whole of "The Silesian Weavers". The translation is by Aaron Kramer, and the verses are reproduced from "The Poetry and Prose of Heinrich Heine", Citadel Press, New York.

THE SILESIAN WEAVERS

In gloomy eyes there wells no tear.
Grinding their teeth, they are sitting here;
"Germany, your shroud's on our loom;
And in it we weave the threefold doom.
We weave; we weave.

"Doomed be the God who was deaf to our prayer
In Winter's cold and hunger's despair.
All in vain we hoped and bided;
He only mocked us, hoaxed, derided—
We weave; we weave.

"Doomed be the king, the rich man's king,
Who would not be moved by our suffering,
Who tore the last coin out of our hands,
And let us be shot by his bloodthirsty bands—
We weave; we weave.

"Doomed be the fatherland, false name,
Where nothing thrives but disgrace and shame,
Where flowers are crushed before they unfold,
Where the worm is quickened by rot and mold—
We weave; we weave.

"The loom is creaking, the shuttle flies;
Nor night nor day do we close our eyes.
Old Germany, your shroud's on our loom,
And in it we weave the threefold doom;
We weave; we weave."

From "GERMANY — A WINTER TALE"

A little harp-girl sang. Her voice
Was strong, though out of key;
And I was deeply stirred to hear
A German melody.

She sang of this earthly vale of tears,
Of pleasures that soon run dry;
How the soul will feast on eternal joys
—Tranfigured in the sky.

I know the authors, I know the tune,
I know it line for line—
In public, water is all they preach;
While in secret they guzzle wine.

A new song, and a better song,
Oh friends, I'll sing for you.
Here on earth we mean to make
Our Paradise come true.

We mean to be happy here on earth—
Our days of want are done.
No more shall the lazy belly waste
What toiling hands have won.

Wheat enough for all mankind
Is planted here below;
Roses and myrtle, beauty and joy,
And green peas, row upon row.

Yes, green peas enough for every man,
As soon as they break their pods.
We gladly leave to the angels and birds
The dainties of the Gods.

A new song, and a better song!
It rings like fiddle and flute.
The miserere sounds no more;
The bells of death are mute.

Young Europe's betrothed to Liberty,
That genius of beauty and grace.
They lie in each other's passionate arms,
They feast on their first embrace.

And although they lack the blessing of priests,
Theirs is a proper wedding.
Long live the bridegroom and his bride
And the children of their begetting!

Heine Banned?

Are the works of Heinrich Heine banned in East Germany? This allegation is made by the American authoress Mrs. Anne Lyon Haight in her volume "Banned Books" (Allen & Unwin, London, 1955). In her book Mrs Haight claims on page 84 that Heine's works were banned in East Berlin in 1954, and on page 92 she goes on to claim that Sinclair Lewis's works are also banned here.

Her allegations have been picked up and repeated by serious people who ought to know better. The latest example to be brought to our attention was an article by R. L. Collison of Westminster City Libraries in the British publication "The Assistant Librarian" dated March 1956. The charge was dealt with in our issue of December 9th 1955, but we repeat the details once again.

Heinrich Heine was one of Germany's greatest poets, and incidentally a friend of Karl Marx. His works are not merely held in honour here, but have been published in editions of hundreds of thousands of copies. Selections of his poems and prose are available in every bookshop and library in the German Democratic Republic, and a big collected edition of Heine's works is now in preparation.

Poems by Heine are part of the regular curriculum in German literature lessons in all schools, and special celebrations have been held throughout the Republic in memory of the poet who died in Paris one hundred years ago.

Sinclair Lewis, also "banned" according to Mrs Haight, is one of the most popular American authors here. "Main Street" and "Babbitt" have been published in very large editions and "Elmer Gantry" and "Arrowsmith" will be out this year.

You Ask — We Answer

TEN YEARS SCHOOL FOR ALL

I should like more details about the new middle school system in the German Democratic Republic.

G. R., Plymouth

At present, compulsory elementary schooling in the German Democratic Republic covers the ages 6—14, but rapid steps are now being taken to extend school to the age of 16 for all children.

This is being done by extending the elementary school into a ten-year school to be known as a middle school.

By 1960, it is hoped to have 40 % of all pupils attending middle schools, and by 1965 all boys and girls will have at least ten years schooling: 30 % of them will go on to high school and get a minimum of 12 years school.

At present primary schools devote 36 % of teaching time to natural science subjects, but this will be increased to 46 % in the middle schools. There will also be two 2-hour periods a week of workshop instruction, from the 5th to the 7th school year in woodwork and in the 8th year in metalwork, and during the 9th and 10th years children will do practical work in factory apprentices' schools.

This extended technical education will of course also mean big changes and a much higher standard in the apprentices' schools themselves, since 16-year-olds coming out of the middle schools will already have learnt much of what is now taught in the apprentices' schools.

A great deal more attention is to be paid to school sports and gymnastics, too, for these have been very much in the background up to now.

There will be many problems and difficulties to overcome in making these changes. Owing to the terrible war damage done to schools in the big towns and to the extreme backwardness of pre-1945 rural education, the first problem was to build enough schools; there are still far too few playing fields, gymnasiums, laboratories and workshops. Thus it might appear that it would have been better to put off the middle school plan for a few years, but the educational authorities — and many parents too — came to the conclusion that the rapid advance of science and technology and the resulting need for large numbers of young people who can grasp the importance of automation, mechanisation and the use of atomic energy, make it imperative to effect the change-over to compulsory ten-year education — with special emphasis on technical education — as quickly as humanly possible.

All sorts of temporary measures will have to be taken, schools will have to use their own initiative, for instance, in converting cellar space or other less urgently needed rooms into workshops; workshop equipment will have to be collected from the factories and materials like wood and cardboard etc. gathered together with the help of parents.

Large numbers of teachers will have to be found; some of the apprentices' school instructors are to be transferred to schools; primary school teachers who were previously workers are taking special courses so that they can teach the junior technical classes, and good factory workers are to be trained in two-year courses to take over senior technical classes.

There are also not enough qualified physical culture teachers, so that for the next few years, Free German Youth instructors, university and senior high school students and members of the factory sports clubs will be called upon to help out.

An important psychological problem has to be dealt with too. Many worker parents cannot get used to the idea of supporting their children for two more years; they feel that it is time they were earning and cannot see the need, for instance, for their children to go on learning a foreign language. But this is something which only needs time. For the next few years children of poorer parents are to get the same stipend as high school pupils, and the advantages of the new type of technical education offered will in the end convert even the most sceptical parents.

YOUTH DEDICATION

What actually happens at a Youth Dedication ceremony?

P. S., Manchester

Our reporter attended one of these ceremonies on Sunday April 22nd in the Schiffbauerdamm Theatre — the Bertolt Brecht Berliner Ensemble theatre — and the ceremony had something of a Brecht character, for Erich Franz of the Berliner Ensemble took part in it, and the theatre children's chorus sang some Bertolt Brecht songs.

The ceremony opened with Mozart music played with great charm by a string quartet of the Berlin Academy of Music. While the music played, the fourteen-year-olds filed into the eight front rows reserved for them. The boys were in lounge suits and wore ties — probably for the first time in their lives — and the girls' frocks were a surprise. There were Perlon, net, shot silk and taffeta frocks in primrose, pink, pale blue and green amongst them, and they all clutched gay little bouquets, mostly tulips.

Then came a Bertolt Brecht song by the children's choir and a short address by the director of the biggest Berlin newspaper publishing house, who also read the pledge which the young people take. This runs as follows:

"Are you ready to devote all your strength for a happy life for the working people, and for progress in economy, science and art?"

"We promise".

"Are you ready to devote all your strength for a united, peace-loving, democratic and independent Germany?"

"We promise".

"Are you ready to live in the spirit of friendship between the nations, and to devote all your strength, together with all peace-loving people, to defending peace to the utmost?"

"We promise."

Then followed Mendelssohn music by a piano, violin and violoncello trio of the Berlin Academy of Music. Parents and friends had been specially asked only to applaud the children, but this students' trio was so good that nobody could resist clapping.

The children's chorus sang two more Brecht songs and then came the distribution of youth dedication certificates and book presents. The children went up to the flower-banked platform in groups of eight and for each group Erich Franz spoke a suitable short quotation — from Goethe, Schiller, Fichte, Clara Zetkin or Ernst Thaelmann, and in conclusion a piece written by Bertolt Brecht in 1927 — "How the Carpet Weavers of Kujan-Bulak honoured Lenin", since April 22nd is Lenin's birthday .

More Mendelssohn music by the Academy of Music trio followed, and the one-and-a-half hour ceremony ended with the national anthem of the German Democratic Republic.

GUEST NOTEBOOK

By Joan Becker

Walking down Friedrichstrasse the other day, I saw an old-rose coloured spring frock in a Konsum (Co-op) dress shop window, so I went in to buy it and came away with a pair of black woollen slacks as well. A couple of years ago I should have been lucky to find these in the best shop in the Stalin Allee, and they would have cost about half as much again, I thought. So just for the fun of it, I took a little walk right down Friedrichstrasse to see what you can get here in the centre of the city.

In a men's shop near the Leipzigerstrasse corner I saw a sheepskin-lined wind jacket and a bright blue matching tweed pullover and jacket — a sort of man's twinset — amongst more conventional garments and the inevitable leather shorts and forester's jacket. Next door the Meissen Porcelain factory has its big show-rooms, but I must confess that although the porcelain itself is exquisite, the pieces on show do not appeal to me at all. They are far too conventional — old Dresden shepherdesses, bunches of flowers all over the plates and dishes and curlicues on the handles of cups and jugs. There are actually some good modern artists, but it appears that buyers are afraid to buy the new designs; they say they will not sell. And you very seldom see them in shop windows.

A little farther along there is another attractive little Konsum dress shop which caters mostly for "young misses" and fuller figures, and just over the road a bookshop specialising in novels and travel and art books.

Then you can get all kinds of perlon, silk and artificial silk lingerie in a little Konsum shop on the left, but their window is too packed and you have to go inside to see what they have.

Tucked away here is a delightful little arts and crafts shop, where I looked at handmade raffia and reed bags from West Germany, rugs, covers and embroidered slippers and handbags from Hungary and Rumania, brass and silver ware from India and some interesting Danish furniture.

A private shop had a surprisingly big selection of cosmetics, perfumes and cosmetics on the corner of Unter den Linden, and next door there is a wonderful little flower shop.

A little to the right on Unter den Linden is one of the best bookshops in Berlin, where you can also subscribe to foreign newspapers and magazines, and across the road, next door to a pleasant restaurant, I bought some really attractive rough grey suede walking shoes with thick porocrepe soles for 63 marks, which would have cost at least a hundred marks two years ago.

There is a leather goods shop next door, where I recently bought a very good quality box calf handbag for just over 50 marks — a real bargain.

Crossing over to the other corner of Friedrichstrasse, I went into a textile store, where they are showing pure woollen materials — Somolana from the Soviet Union, Irish tweeds and light Chinese woollen materials — in one window, and gossamer-fine Perlon and embroidered pure silk underwear in pastel shades in the other. I went in and looked at the summer dress materials — gaily coloured Perlons, poplin, Honan silk and artificial silks; there was a heavy ribbed Perlon in turquoise which I thought very attractive.

Automobiles and motorboats are on show next door, and further down, in a sports outfitters', I found brightly coloured sateen gym shorts and smart summer shorts with turnups and triple elastic tops for the children — for which I had hunted in vain last year.

Towards Friedrichstrasse station, in the Arcade, there is a small wine shop, a grocery store which opens at 7 a. m. for business people, and where they also stock all sorts of herb medicines.

Near the station, though, there is a picture shop past which I always hurry with averted gaze so as not to see the boring pictures displayed; but I suppose some people like them. Then there is a fine flower and seed shop with an all-glass front, where you can buy all kinds of seeds and seedlings, bulbs, cactus and other pot plants, as well as gorgeous cut flowers.

The pleasant Press Cafe is just beyond the station, and then you come to the exhibition pavilions. Just now the Czech pavilion is showing books, but they have also had art and handicrafts exhibitions. The new Polish pavilion will soon open, but the big attraction at the moment is a gorgeous exhibition of Indian handicrafts — saris, hand-dyed and hand-woven stuffs, gold and silver embossed leather, brass and silver work, lacquer and cloisonné. The exhibits are priced and are all for sale.

Farther along, past the Johannishof Hotel, I looked into Bert's window. Bert is one of the very few exclusive dress designers in East Berlin, and he produces some really striking models. He shows only one model in his show window, which is tiled light grey and has some wrought iron work and two cheerful little old pen paintings of fashionable 19th century ladies.

Along this stretch there are a number of rather poky little shops with packed windows, but amongst them the Deutsche Buecherstube, actually a book shop, always has interesting handicraft exhibitions in its windows. The owners are particularly interested in trying to direct people's tastes away from the fussy and conventional. I went in to look at their exhibition of modern children's toys and some suggested improvements for designs on children's pottery. Our factories are still turning out quantities of old-fashioned, anaemically coloured children's sets, fussy dolls and uninstructive toys, and the main trouble here, too, seems to be that buyers insist the public won't buy the new designs. This shop is doing pioneer work in proving that the new designs really do sell.

I finished up at a textile and clothing shop on the corner near the north station. Their stock is good, and I saw some embroidered pure Irish linen sheets and pillow-slips which anyone would be proud to own. Here the window-dressing is often spoilt by painful colour combinations, but I had a pleasant surprise this time, for one window was full of examples from the Indian handicrafts exhibition and there was a big crowd round it.

Feeling pretty exhausted, I turned into Cafe Clou, where I had never been before, and was surprised at the size of the dance floor. They have a little orchestra here and there is dancing every day.

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